

At-A-Glance: Recent Research Findings

A New Look at Neighborhood Disorder

Journal article, "Systematic Social Observation of Public Spaces: A New Look at Disorder in Urban Neighborhoods," American Journal of Sociology, Robert J. Sampson and Stephen W. Raudenbush (NCJ 181623). Available from NCJRS interlibrary loan.

The "broken windows" theory that predatory crime follows on the heels of neighborhood disorder is overstated, according to researchers who videotaped the condition and street life of 250 miles of city blocks in Chicago and interviewed more than 3,500 residents of the same areas. Overall they found that the predatory crime rate—homicide, robbery, and burglary—depends more on economic-related factors and the willingness and capacity of people to work together to keep up their neighborhood.

Robert J. Sampson of the University of Chicago and Stephen W. Raudenbush of the University of Michigan used the photographing and systematic rating of 23,000 street segments in Chicago to construct scales of social and physical disorder for 196 neighborhoods, selected to maximize variation by race/ethnicity and class/socioeconomic status. Then, employing census data, police records, and an independent survey of residents, they determined the degree of residents' cohesion and shared expectations for social control of neighborhood public space.

Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods

Their study was part of a much larger interdisciplinary investigation

aimed at understanding the causes and pathways of juvenile delinquency, crime, substance abuse, and violence. Called the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods, it is directed from the Harvard Medical School and funded by NIJ, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the National Institute of Mental Health, the U.S. Department of Education, and the Administration for Children, Youth and Families.

The project, unique in size and scope, combines an intensive study of various aspects of Chicago's neighborhoods with a series of longitudinal studies of approximately 6,500 children and adolescents, looking at their personal characteristics and the changing

circumstances of their lives that may lead them toward or away from delinquent behavior. The project seeks to unravel the individual, family, and collective processes that determine what makes some communities safe and lawful and others dangerous. It also looks at the different combinations of factors that lead some individuals to criminal behavior while others maintain crime-free lives even in high-risk neighborhoods.

Social Disorder and Its Connections to Crime

Social disorder refers to public behaviors usually involving strangers and considered threatening, such as verbal rowdiness among young males, harassment, intoxication, solicitation for prostitution, and

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Materials are available at:

- NIJ's Web site at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij>, or
- NCJRS, puborder@ncjrs.org, 1-800-851-3420, P.O. Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849-6000.

The summaries in this section are based on the following:

Research in Progress Seminars. At these seminars, scholars discuss their ongoing research and preliminary findings with an audience of researchers and criminal justice professionals. Sixty-minute VHS videotapes of the Research in Progress seminars are available from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) at 1-800-851-3420. Videotaped seminars are \$19 (\$24 in Canada and other countries).

NIJ Final Reports. These final submissions from NIJ grantees typically are available from NCJRS through interlibrary loan. In some cases, photocopies may be obtained for a fee. For information about these reports and possible fees, contact NCJRS.

NIJ Publications. Some of the information here is summarized from recent NIJ publications, which are available from the NIJ Web site or by contacting NCJRS. Refer to the documents' accession (ACN) or NCJ numbers.

drug sales. Physical disorder refers to signs of urban deterioration, such as graffiti on buildings, abandoned cars, broken windows, and syringes, needles, condoms, beer bottles, cigarettes, and garbage in the streets.

Connections between disorder and both fear of crime and crime rates have been established by prior research. Indeed, the prevailing broken windows thesis holds that minor disorder is a direct cause of serious crime. Its originators argued that public incivilities attract predatory crime because offenders assume that residents are indifferent to what goes on in their neighborhood. The broken windows thesis has led to police crackdowns on the symptoms of disorder in numerous cities, with New York City the most well-known example.

The Sampson-Raudenbush study was based on the idea that rather than disorder causing crime, many elements of disorder are part and parcel of crime itself. For example, solicitation for prostitution, loitering, drinking or using drugs in public, smashed windows, drug vials in the street, and graffiti are all evidence either of crimes or ordinance violations.

The study also sought to test the effect of a neighborhood's economic and social makeup on preventing crime. In the case of poor neighborhoods, economic deprivation limits the ability to repair buildings and clean up litter. Also, with many stores and apartments vacant, investors have little incentive to repair their properties. Residential instability can undermine social ties while high levels of home ownership and low levels of transience give neighbors a stake in neighborhood well-being and an incentive to work together to protect public order. Other possible structural handicaps to counteracting public incivilities

include a highly dense population and commercial land use.

The study also examined the informal mechanisms by which residents initiate or achieve control of public spaces. Examples of "collective efficacy" include intervention by residents to prevent vandalism, truancy, fighting, and street corner disturbances; and resident activism to protect public order in other ways (for example, by preventing the closure of a local fire station). Presumably, the shared willingness of neighborhood residents to intervene to protect their surroundings depends in part on cohesion and mutual trust.

Collective Efficacy and Broken Windows

The study found that disorder and crime, rather than being cause and effect, appear to *both* be the common products of weakened social controls and neighborhood socioeconomic disadvantage, especially concentrated poverty, and in the case of disorder, the presence of mixed, residential-commercial land use. Disorder was not directly associated with predatory crime except for robbery.

Although the findings contradict the original broken windows thesis, they do not imply the irrelevance of disorder. Physical and social disorder comprise highly visible cues about the neighborhood to insiders and outsiders alike—prospective homebuyers, real estate agents, insurance agents, and investors. Disorder may be important to understanding metropolitan migration patterns, business investment, and overall neighborhood viability. If disorder operates in a cascading fashion, for example, by discouraging collective efficacy and encouraging people to move away, thus increasing residential instability, it would indirectly affect crime.

The findings suggest that the fashionable notion of cleaning up disorder through law enforcement measures is simplistic and may be misplaced as a means for directly fighting crime. Attacking disorder may be an analytically weak strategy to reduce crime. Based on their study, the authors suggest an approach that examines how residents' collective action to stem disorder may increase collective efficacy, in the long run lowering crime.

For More Information

- Visit the Web site of the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods, <http://phdcn.harvard.edu>. See also *Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods 1999 Annual Report*, available from PHDCN, Harvard University, College House, 4th Floor, 1430 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138, 617-495-5381.
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Effectiveness of Residential Drug Treatment for Florida Probationers

NIJ Research in Progress Seminar, "Effectiveness of Residential Drug Treatment for Florida Probationers," Pamela Lattimore and Richard Linster, available on videotape from NCJRS (NCJ 179013).

Assigning probationers to drug treatment programs appears to reduce both overall probation failure rates and new offending rates, according to recently released findings from an evaluation of Florida Residential Treatment Programs for Probationers. Results indicated that being assigned to substance abuse treatment prevented approximately 3,600 probation failures in the 2 years after assignment.

The project—sponsored by NIJ and the Florida Department of Corrections (DOC)—sought to determine the impact of assignment to various substance abuse treatment options by identifying drug-involved DOC admissions, examining changes in sentencing outcomes (i.e., prison versus probation), and evaluating the impact of treatment. Conducted by Pamela Lattimore of Research Triangle Institute and former NIJ Visiting Fellow Richard Linster, the evaluation was based on extensive analyses of DOC administrative data.

Sentences for Drug-Involved Offenders

In the first phase of the study, researchers found that 48 percent of DOC admissions between July 1991 and June 1997 were drug involved (i.e., the inmates had been sentenced to probation or prison and had at least one drug offense conviction or at least one court referral for treatment). The examination of sentencing decisions during this period found a dramatic

decrease in prison admissions among the drug involved.

In addition, on average, both those sentenced to prison and those sentenced to probation had more prior prison admissions (i.e., both groups had become "more serious"). This is consistent with the objectives of the prison diversion policy Florida legislators established in 1991, which sought to divert drug-involved offenders from prison to probation.

Impact of Treatment Programs

For the program evaluation, drug-involved probationers were classified based on their assignment to one of four treatment options: Secure (long-term) residential, nonsecure (short-term) residential, nonresidential, or no treatment. For research purposes, offenders assigned to a nonresidential program and those not assigned to treatment were separated into two study populations each by the date of program assignment.

Approximately 180,000 drug-involved offenders were assigned to probation from July 1991 through June 1995. Of these, approximately 40,000 offenders were excluded from the study for research-related reasons, such as missing variables.

The study examined the success and failure rates of probationers within 2 years of program assignment. Success was defined as no new sentence or revocation. Probation success was highest among offenders assigned to nonresidential treatment, with rates of 57 percent and 51 percent for the two groups. The groups of probationers not assigned to treatment had success rates of 47 percent and 41 percent. Those assigned to secure residential programs—offenders at high risk of failure—had success rates of 39 percent. Those assigned to nonsecure residential programs had success rates of 42 percent.

In another measure of the impact of program assignment, researchers devised models to control for the effect of treatment. Observed success rates for each treatment option were compared with the success rates that would have been expected without treatment. Findings revealed that for all treatment options, the success rates for offenders assigned to treatment were higher than the rates that would have been expected without treatment.

Why Offenders Failed Probation

Another area of study concerned the reasons why offenders failed probation. As expected, the majority of failures could be traced to technical offenses or other violations, not new offenses. However, residential treatment was estimated to have reduced new offending by approximately 45 percent.

Juveniles in Adult Prisons

Final Report submitted to NIJ, New "Boys" on the Block: Under-18-Year-Olds in Adult Prisons, Robert B. Levinson and John J. Greene, American Correctional Association, June 1998 (NCJ 181624), available from NCJRS.

The number of young people in adult prisons nearly tripled after 1982, exceeding 7,000 by 1997. Between 1995 and 1997, this population grew at the rate of 18 percent a year, and further expansion is expected in the next 5 years.

The number of such inmates in 1997 varied tremendously by State. Three States had none (New Hampshire, West Virginia, and Wyoming), while Connecticut had 959. Montana had the largest proportion of these youths relative to the State's entire prisoner population—almost 8 percent.

A team from the American Correctional Association conducted a telephone survey and onsite interviews to ascertain the number of minors in the Nation's prisons and to examine how State departments of corrections are managing them. The survey required sorting departments of corrections into one of four management types, corresponding to the method each jurisdiction followed to house its under 18-year-old youths (separated vs. integrated) and the size of that group (large vs. small). The team conducted interviews to obtain an in-depth view of how inmates under 18 are handled in four different adult prisons.

The Growth in the Number of Juvenile Inmates

From 1965 through 1992 the arrest rate for violent crime committed by those 18 or under rose 360 percent. Juveniles accounted for 13 percent of all violent crimes—murder, forcible rape, aggravated assault, and robbery—cleared by arrest in 1996. Such statistics have led citizens and politicians to favor heavier penalties for serious juvenile offenders. Since 1978, 44 States and the District of Columbia have passed laws to enlarge the number and types of crimes for which juveniles may be sent to an adult criminal court and to streamline the process.

The growing population of juveniles brings new responsibilities for staff in adult prisons. Serious juvenile offenders need to be understood in terms of their backgrounds and psychological makeup. For prisons, special attention needs to be given to staff selection policies, training, and programs for young offenders.

How States House Juveniles

The research team found four methods for housing juvenile inmates in adult prisons:

- Place them in administrative segregation (akin to protective custody) until they reach 18.
- Keep them in a separate institution that houses only inmates under 18.
- House them together in one or more units within a facility that also holds adults.
- Integrate them into an institution's general population.

In short, there were three ways to separate youthful from adult inmates and one way to integrate them.

The survey found that the majority of States housed youthful offenders with adult inmates, rather than separating them. Mixing adults and minors was especially likely for those systems that had higher proportions of under-18-year-olds in their inmate populations.

Other Survey Findings

Project staff also examined in-depth four prisons housing a fairly large number of minors in the Northeast, South, Midwest, and Northwest. They represented four combinations of system size (small vs. large) and management approach (separated vs. integrated). From onsite visits with personnel at these four institutions, the authors observed:

- Security for inmates younger than 18 was a special concern only in those facilities that separated this population from adult inmates.
- Youthful offenders tended to be involved in more disciplinary incidents than their adult counterparts and, reportedly, had a higher rate of segregation commitments.
- Inmates younger than 18 received fewer visits than adult prisoners.

- Not much attention was paid to programs for young offenders, although special education arrangements were made for inmates previously identified in the community as needing such services.
- Special training for staff in how to deal with young inmates was rarely mentioned, and then only where under-18-year-olds were separated from adults.
- For the most part, the influx of young people into adult prisons has resulted in few changes in policy or procedures, other than those mandated by law.
- There is a high degree of congruence between the staff's attitudes as to how minors should be dealt with and that jurisdiction's management philosophy.

Implications for Program Development

The authors regard offenders under 18 who are waived to adult court as juveniles, regardless of how they are treated by State law. They recommend that adult institutions that hold youthful inmates take the following into consideration:

Staff training. All institution staff who come in direct contact with youthful inmates should receive additional training on how to work with them.

Housing. Placement at a separate facility within the adult corrections system is preferable; if there are too few prisoners younger than 18 to make this economically feasible, then (at a minimum) one or more separate units in an adult institution should be established for them.

Education. Youthful inmates should be encouraged to earn a GED, and special provisions should be made for those younger than the State's age limit for mandatory education.

The facility should provide an education program, and inmates should be required to participate until they gain a GED or turn 18. Inmates requiring special accommodations to complete their GED should receive them. Physical education should be part of the regular regimen.

Counseling. Social skills training—for example, anger management, drug and alcohol guidance, AIDS instruction, and parenting skills—should be mandatory for youthful inmates until they turn 18, and then voluntary thereafter.

Life management. Career awareness, skill development, and work assignments should be integrated in the program plan for every inmate under 18.

Program schedule. Every inmate should follow an individualized schedule containing the above elements, as appropriate, from wakeup to lights out.

Alcohol, Drugs, and Battered Women's Calls to the Police

Final Report and Executive Summary submitted to NIJ, The Influence of Alcohol and Drugs on Women's Utilization of the Police for Domestic Violence, Ira W. Hutchison, June 1999 (NCJ 179277), available from NCJRS.

Battered women are abused far more often than they report domestic violence to the police, according to a study in Charlotte, North Carolina, sponsored by the National Institute of Justice. The researcher also found that women were more likely to call the police if the batterer was drunk or using drugs and that women's own drinking was not related to their summoning the police. Most women who call the police want the batterer arrested or otherwise removed.

Charlotte was one of five locales where the NIJ-funded Spouse Assault Replication Project collected and archived arrest and outcome data. Professor Ira W. Hutchison of the University of North Carolina—Charlotte was one of the researchers who conducted the original Charlotte study for the project. For that study, interviews were conducted with 419 women involved in a misdemeanor-level incident of domestic violence who had either called the police themselves or had a call made on their behalf. The women were largely poor or working class. Hutchison's research goal was to analyze the data from the previous study to determine whether calling the police to report domestic abuse was influenced by substance abuse on the part of either abusers or victims.

The rate of alcohol consumption was unusually high among both batterers and victims. Nearly five times as many men and women in this sample as in a national sample were "high" drinkers (23.9 vs. 4.9 percent) and nearly three times as many were binge drinkers (12.6 vs. 4.6 percent). Men in the Charlotte sample were particularly heavy drinkers; more than one-half (52.8 percent) were high or binge drinkers compared to 18.4 percent of the women. The men also drank in large quantities. Among the "high" drinkers, 78.4 percent consumed 6 or more drinks a day and 37.0 percent 10 or more drinks daily.

Reports to Police

Most of the domestic violence was never reported to the police. Women reported being threatened, on average, 4.4 times in the 6 months preceding the abusive incident and a total of 22.5 times over the course of the relationship. They reported being hit by the offender an average of 3.5 times in the previous 6 months and 10.4 times over the

entire relationship. However, these women had called the police, on average, only 1.8 times in the previous 6 months and 3.3 times since the relationship had begun.

The researchers found that the frequency with which women called the police, over both the 6-month period and the lifetime of the relationship, was tied to the frequency with which the abuser was drunk or used marijuana and the frequency with which he hit the victim.

In nearly two-thirds of the cases, women called the police themselves. When the victim did not place the call, she asked someone (a neighbor, friend, or child) to do so in nearly half the cases. Someone else was more likely to call when the victim had been injured than when she had not been. Most women who called the police did so for a combination of two reasons: Punitive—because of what her partner had already done—and preventive—fear of what he might do.

Close to one-third (29.7 percent) of the women wanted the police to arrest the offender when they made the call. Even more (41.0 percent) wanted the police to remove the offender from the scene. In short, more than two-thirds of the women (70.7 percent) wanted the police to take the offender away.

Typically, the abuse in the incidents in question took the form of striking the victim (86.8 percent) or threatening the victim (63.2 percent). Aggression against other family members and property also was common. Minor children often witnessed the abusive incidents.

Alcohol and Drug Use

Drinking was the single most common factor associated with the abusive incident, according to both victims and police reports. Three-fifths (60.4 percent) of the offenders were drinking at the time. They had

consumed, on average, 6.7 drinks. Among those drinking, more than half were drunk (57.9 percent). Almost half the men (43.4 percent) were drinking more than usual. In addition, about one-fifth (21.8 percent) of the men were using drugs before or at the time of the abuse.

Women whose partners drank were much more likely to be afraid of them than women whose partners seldom drank. They had reason to be. Women who reported they were very often fearful when their partners were drinking were threatened and hit two to three times as often as women who said they were never afraid when their partners were drinking.

Policy Implications

These findings suggest that law enforcement policies about responding to abusive incidents should be reviewed, formal cooperative efforts with community service agencies that deal with substance abuse should be strengthened, and involvement with the judicial system in handling substance-abusing batterers should be routine.

The Declining Rate of Intimate Partner Homicide

NIJ Research in Progress Seminar, "The Declining Rate of Intimate Partner Homicide," Laura Dugan, Daniel Nagin, and Richard Rosenfeld, available on videotape from NCJRS (NCJ 180212).

Rates of homicide among intimate partners have been decreasing steadily since 1976. However, the decline cannot be explained by a concomitant trend in the overall homicide rate, which, due to the changing pattern in youth homicide, began to rise in 1986, peaked in 1992, and thereafter has declined steadily (see figure 1).

Recent research findings indicate that declines in intimate partner homicide may be due to factors that reduce an intimate partner's exposure to risk of homicide: Police and prosecution practices, women's increased participation in the labor force, services for domestic violence victims, Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC) benefits, and legal advocacy. (Legal advocacy services

are intended to help women better negotiate the legal system by providing support and information relevant to the legal process. Legal advocates may help a woman apply for a protection order or prepare to testify against her abuser, among other things.)

The findings are mixed, however, and vary for different groups. Some factors are more likely to reduce the risk of homicide for married partners, but may actually exacerbate the risk for unmarried partners. For example, police policies allowing an arrest without a warrant were associated with fewer homicides for all white females and black unmarried males, but may have increased homicides of white married males.

For an NIJ-funded study, Laura Dugan, Georgia State University; Daniel Nagin, Carnegie Mellon University; and Richard Rosenfeld, University of Missouri–St. Louis, collaborated with staff at the Women's Center and Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh and other specialists. The study gathered data for 48 cities from 1976 to 1996.

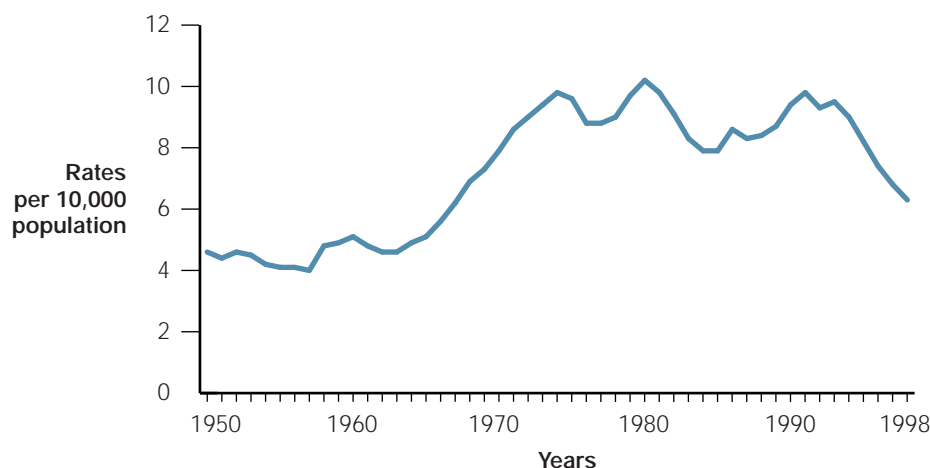
During the time period, the decreases in intimate partner homicide were greater for male victims than for female victims, for blacks than for whites, and for married victims than for unmarried victims.

Differences Between Races

Overall, levels of intimate partner homicide have been much higher for blacks than for whites. In recent years, the rates have started to converge because the decline for blacks has been so sharp—80 percent for males and 60 percent for females—although the greatest decline for black females occurred during the early part of the period (see figure 2).

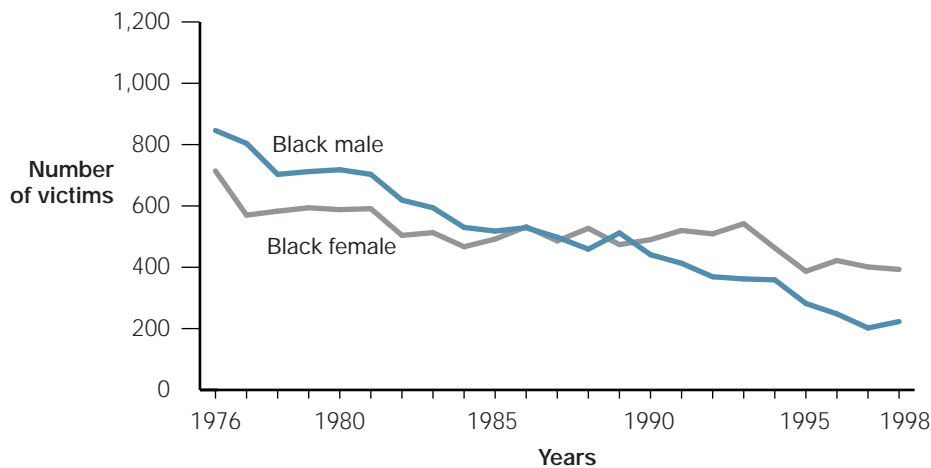
White male deaths from intimate partners dropped continuously by a

Figure 1: Homicide Victimization: National Trends, 1950–1998



Source: U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Uniform Crime Reports, 1950–1998*.

Figure 2: Intimate Partner Homicide Rates by Sex of Victim, 1976–1998: Blacks



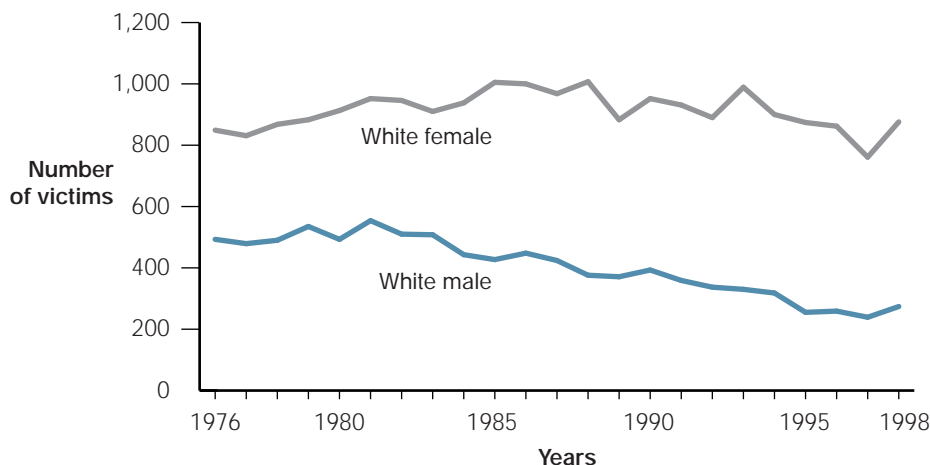
Source: Fox, James Alan, and Marianne W. Zawitz, *Homicide Trends in the United States*, Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, January 1999 (NCJ 173956). See also <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/homicide/intimates.htm>.

Correction: Bethlehem Police Family Group Conferencing Project

A summary of the NIJ-sponsored evaluation of the Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Family Group Conferencing Project was published in the October 1999 issue of the *NIJ Journal*. The researchers noted errors in the summary. Corrections are as follows:

- The title of the report is "Restorative Policing Experiment: The Bethlehem Pennsylvania Police Family Group Conferencing Project," by Paul McCold and Benjamin Wachtel, May 1998 (NCJ 177564). Copies are available from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service.
- Only the attitudes of police officers toward policing, not the attitudes of citizens in general, were measured.

Figure 3: Intimate Partner Homicide Rates by Sex of Victim, 1976–1998: Whites



Source: Fox, James Alan, and Marianne W. Zawitz, *Homicide Trends in the United States*, Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, January 1999 (NCJ 173956). See also <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/homicide/intimates.htm>.

total of 60 percent. The 20-percent decrease in rates for white females did not begin until the 1980's (see

figure 3). Rates of intimate partner homicide for black married women were unaffected by the strength of

legal advocacy, while rates for white married women decreased as legal advocacy became stronger.

As the relative education of their partners increased, black unmarried males and females and black married males were more likely to be killed.

In addition, in areas with higher AFDC benefits, fewer black unmarried males, white unmarried males, and black unmarried females were killed.

For More Information

This study has yet to be published. For additional information about the study, contact Laura Dugan, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Criminal Justice, College of Health and Human Sciences, Georgia State University, P.O. Box 4018, Atlanta, GA 30302-4018.